

Ren Feinberg

MARY HARTMAN
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EPISODE #173

by

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FINAL DRAFT
10/3/76

CAST OF CHARACTERS

[illegible]

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ACT ONETIPPYTOES' TRAILER, MORNING (NEW DAY)

ANNIE IS STANDING UPSIDE DOWN ON HER SHOULDERS, IN AN ELEMENTARY YOGA POSITION, WITH HER BACK PROPPED UP WITH HER HANDS. MARTHA ENTERS, UPSET.

MARTHA

(ENTERING) Hellooo... Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize you were trying to lose weight.

ANNIE

I'm not.

MARTHA

Oh. Well, I came here to cry on your shoulder, but since you're standing on both of them, I'll just go home and cry on my own.

ANNIE

Wait. Stay... I'll be down in a minute.

MARTHA

That sounds like Judy Garland getting ready to go on a date. "I just adore the boy next door -- " But I won't ask what you're getting ready for because it's none of my business.

ANNIE

I'm flooding my thorax with blood.

MARTHA

Oh, dear... Should I call an ambulance?

ANNIE

(LOWEING BACK AND THEN LEGS SLOWLY) I'm not bleeding, Martha. I'm only relaxing. The upside down position feeds your head -- I mean, it helps circulation.

MARTHA

Yes... I suppose circulation is a problem in these little trailers. I'm only a size 10 (?) and it's hard as it is to get by.

ANNIE

(SITTING SLOWLY. SYMPATHETIC) Are you having a rocky time of getting by, Mrs. Shumway? You do kinda seem a little spacey... (SHE SLOWLY BENDS TOWARDS HER KNEES)

MARTHA

Well, I'm spacier than that hallway you're collapsing in. And I lost my last hope of getting George out of outer space this afternoon.

ANNIE

(TO HER KNEES) Maybe you oughta try this. (COMING UP SLOW) With a clear mind, you can see forever. (DOWN AGAIN)

MARTHA

"On a clear day
Rise and look around you..." Of course,
it isn't funny, Annie. Jack and Jill
skipped town so they wouldn't be granted
immunity from auto-incrimination, which
means my one link with the Krinal trihe
of intergalactic government has snapped.
And now George can't even send us a low
resolution image.

ANNIE

(CRADLING LEFT HEEL IN RIGHT ARM, RUBBING
TOES) You feel like everything is all
over, don't you.

MARTHA

Annie, losing George is like losing the
first half of Mission Impossible. Nothing
that happens next can possibly make sense.

ANNIE

(OTHER FOOT) Well, you know what they say,
Martha: When you got nothing, you got
nothing to lose. Which means there's
nowhere to go but up.

MARTHA

Well, at least your husband died so you
could keep track of him. But George is
out there somewhere with a bunch of
heavenly bodies, and I don't know what
on earth to do. I'm lost.

ANNIE

(SEMI LOTUS) Ah! But you've still got yourself, Martha. And the best thing for you is probably to get back in circulation.

MARTHA

But how can I get my circulation back when it's even harder for me to reach my toes than it is to reach outer space?

ANNIE

(GETTING UP) It isn't a choice, Martha. You're just going to have to take care of yourself. Now look... Where's my writing tablet? We'll make a list. What you need on one side, what you used to get from George on the other, and down the middle we'll list the people who can fill in.

MARTHA

This is very organized. Were you ever a secretary?

ANNIE

Flattery won't work, Martha. (PEN POISED)
Shoot.

MARTHA

You want my needs? (THINKS) Well...
George.

ANNIE

How about money.

MARTHA

Oh, no... Detective Johnson has found me a job with the police, and Grandpa's in the mortuary, and Cathy's selling her ... creative talents.

ANNIE

(WRITING) Okay... Now, how about someone to talk to?

MARTHA

Well, there's Millicent, my asparagus fern. Just write "plants".

ANNIE

Couldn't you talk to George while he was ... Wasn't in space?

MARTHA

Of course. I told George everything.

ANNIE

And did he listen? Did he care?

MARTHA

Well... Not about what I said, usually. But about me. George used to have the sweetest way of saying "Shut up, Martha!" I always knew he cared by the way he said it.

ANNIE

So you don't really need someone who'll, you know, pay attention when you talk?

MARTHA

Oh. I'm too old for that, Annie. I don't know why, but I am.

ANNIE

Okay. We'll just write "plants" here for now. Rolling right along here... Caring. George cared. Does anybody else?

MARTHA

Well, yes; that is, Grandpa gets jealous of my real father, so he cares. And Mary cares when she's not recovering from a nervous breakdown. And, well... Detective Johnson protects me from the criminal element even when he's off duty. So that's a form of caring.

ANNIE

I'll say. Sounds like he's a little starry eyed over you, Martha...

MARTHA

But then there's my caring. I did so enjoy caring about George eating his roughage and not being framed up with a naked hostess in Milwaukee, and forgiving him when he didn't listen to me either about roughage or his bad heart.

ANNIE

And warmth? (SHE WANTS MARTHA OFF THE TOPIC)

MARTHA

Well, we have central heating...

ANNIE

George wasn't big on warmth?

MARTHA

Oh, Annie. George and I were just like a movie with Doris Day and Rock Hudson. Sooner or later we always were as one together, even though nobody would ever be able to understand how. We fought well. Maybe that's the key.

ANNIE

(SOFT) And... you get lonely at night now?

MARTHA

Well, when I can wait that long, yes. Usually I start earlier in the day. Like when I wake up and go to wash my face in morning, and see George's toothbrush sitting there, all dry.

ANNIE

Well, you're welcome to come sleep over here tonight, if sleeping solo is what gets you so low.

MARTHA

Here... Oh, no. That's very sweet of you -- but I wouldn't be comfortable in the sink or on the card table or the floor.

ANNIE

I meant in my bed.

MARTHA

Oh, I couldn't ask you to sleep in your own sink! That wouldn't be right!

ANNIE

I meant, I'd sleep in the bed, too.

MARTHA PALES.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

... Over on the other side. You know, like a pajama party.

MARTHA

At fifty-one? I'm fifty-one.

ANNIE

So am I.

MARTHA

Oh, my goodness, Lord.

ANNIE

What's the matter?

MARTHA

Well, your fifty-one and my fifty-one are not exactly the same fifty-one.

ANNIE

And no two snowflakes are the same either.

MARTHA

I'm not a snowflake. I'm a fifty-one year old near widow from Macon, Georgia, who is too dignified to get back in the swing of pajama parties.

ANNIE

You're just rusty.

MARTHA

No, that's the hair tint I use to make my hair hair colored.

ANNIE

I love it.

MARTHA

Thank you. It's better for your follicles than platinum.

ANNIE

So. You still have an empty box here, in the warm body category. Hey, how about that Detective Johnson? He's the only one listed here aside from your family and your fern.

MARTHA

Annie! It's illegal to sleep with people who aren't your husband. If I slept with a police detective he'd have to arrest me.

ANNIE

Not if he were off duty. Look, Martha. George is gone. He doesn't exist.

MARTHA

He does so. I've got 503 snapshots to prove it.

ANNIE

Snapshots can't tell you to shut up, or kiss you goodnight. And neither can missing persons.

MARTHA

Annie. If you were not yourself a widow with no real home or job or anyone to care for, I would say you're being very hard on me. But I'm sure you said all these questions to yourself and they helped you to cope, so all I can say is, 'Mind your own business!'

ANNIE

It is my business, Martha. Life's too short to spend it looking in rear-view mirrors. You gotta keep going forward.

MARTHA

(GETTING UP) I'm going home.

ANNIE

You angry?

MARTHA

(A HALF BEAT) Noooo. You've been warm, and caring, Annie, and listened to me, and fought with me, and offered to sleep in your pajamas with me, and fixed me up with a policeman and complimented me on my dye job. You've even showed me what to do for my circulation. But your being so nice to me just makes me wish you were George so bad... I could (CRIES).

ANNIE HOLDS MARTHA, WHO CRIES ON HER SHOULDER.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Ooooh... I feel so abandoned!!

ANNIE

(OVER SHOULDER, SOOTHINGLY) Martha... A
little bit of abandon would do you a
world of good.

FADE OUT.

ACT TWOSHUMWAY KITCHEN - NOON

H.V. JOHNSON STANDS. MARTHA SITS.

JOHNSON

Martha -- How does this sound. (READS FROM A PAPER) Many things led me to suspect this so-called Jack and his partner, a woman, of suspicious activity. In the first place, the con game is a couples' game, which is to say that con artists commonly operate in twos. So -- When Jack showed up with Jill, his partner, it wasn't hard to put one and one together and come up with scam. It wasn't long before I decided to put these two murphey birds under observation. I chose their natural habitat: the home of a vivacious and attractive potential widow whose spouse had recently been added to our "missing person" rolls.

MARTHA

H.V.?

JOHNSON

Would 'husband' be better than 'spouse'?

MARTHA

H.V. I know you have to issue a statement to alert local citizens as to the danger surrounding us on all sides, like you said. But isn't there some way to leave me out of it?

JOHNSON

I would never mention you by name, Martha. You know I'd never expose your personal involvement with this case, ever.

MARTHA

But H.V. How many potential widows are there in Fernwood? Most of the widows I know have achieved their potential already.

JOHNSON

Every married woman is a potential widow. That's why you pay taxes to support The Force. It's a question of protection.

SFX: CLATTERING MACHINE SOUND

What's that racket? Is somebody trying to break in?

MARTHA

That's just "Rinse," H.V. It's the phase of the cycle that keeps your glasses from spotting.

JOHNSON

You mean... a dishwasher?

MARTHA

Grandpa got it at an estate sale. He said that the mortuary has inside dope on dead people. Ohhh... I hope George isn't dead.

JOHNSON

I have a hunch he isn't, Martha.

MARTHA

You do? Does your hunch have any leads?

JOHNSON

Listen to you. You're talking like a real police woman. You sure do pick up on things quickly.

MARTHA

Now, H.V. Don't give me so many compliments. You'll be all flattered out.

JOHNSON

I mean it, Martha. I... well... I'm beginning to get a little sweet on you, if I do say so myself.

MARTHA

Oh, please don't say so, H.V. After all, it isn't legal to be too sweet on a married woman. Even if she's married to a missing person like George. He could walk in that door any minute, you know.

JOHNSON

I wouldn't count on that, if I was you, ma'am.

MARTHA

Don't people ever come back from the universe, H.V.? Maybe I should try to reserve him a seat on that new space shuttle. I just can't believe he's gone forever.

JOHNSON

Well, I can't pretend to know how long he's gone for... but it's a likely guess what he's gone looking for. There's heavenly bodies and heavenly bodies... galore, Martha. What I think they call, "An encounter of the third kind."

(NOTE: AN "ENCOUNTER OF THE FIRST KIND" IS A UFO SIGHTING. 3RD IS EXTRA TERESTIAL BEINGS SHAKING YOUR LEADER.)

MARTHA

Oh, you don't mean hankypanky, do you? I'd almost rather George was in orbit.

JOHNSON

(FONDLY) Orbit, or obit?

MARTHA

That's what I said...

JOHNSON

But I got an idea. I mean, because I'd like to help if I could, being sweet on you as I said and all. And that, well, maybe the missing party'd come running back pronto if you got him all... you know, maybe jealous?

MARTHA

You mean, like what Mary told Loretta about Jody because of Charlie like on Hope for Tomorrow?

JOHNSON

(MOVING IN CLOSER) Sure.

MARTHA

(BECOMING INCREASINGLY BREATHLESS FROM HERE) You mean... just pretend?

JOHNSON

Yeah.

MARTHA

Like a... like a pre-recorded re-enactment?

JOHNSON

(CLOSER) Kinda...

MARTHA

Well... But not live, H.V.

JOHNSON

No. No. (MOVES IN)

MARTHA

Just a run-through. (TURNS AWAY) Oh, I can't, H.V. Not in close up.

JOHNSON

Come on, Martha... I've seen you act. You're good.

MARTHA

But only as a victim of attempted rape. Not as somebody pretending to be... (SHE FALLS PASSIONATELY INTO HIS ARMS) ... abandoned.

PASSIONATE KISS. AT THE SOUND OF
THE DOOR OPENING THEY PULL APART AND
STAND STIFFLY DISTANT... IF POSSIBLE
BEHIND SEPARATE CHAIRS.

MARTHA

(TIMIDLY) George?

IT'S CATHY. WELL-HEELED AND SLEEK.
NOBODY MOVES. A BEAT.

CATHY

What is this, a presidential debate or
something?

MARTHA

Cathy! We thought you were George. I
didn't know you were allowed out of that
fancy house where you sold your...

CATHY

(INTERRUPTING, WITH A LOOK AT H.V.) Maaaaa!!

JOHNSON

Your luck's holding, ma'am. I'm off duty.

CATHY

Yeah, well, so am I... But what are you
doing here, if you're off duty?

MARTHA

H.V. was helping me find George.

CATHY

(KNOWINGLY) Uh huh. By wearing lipstick?

H.V. HURRIEDLY WIPES MOUTH.

CATHY (CONT'D)

It's okay, Detective Johnson. I won't
drop your name if you don't drop mine.

JOHNSON

(MIFFED) The Lord may forgive all sinners, Miss Shumway, but the law's gotta draw the line.

MARTHA

(HELPFUL) Maybe we could arrange a signal for when H.V.'s on duty and when he's off.

CATHY

Thanks, Ma, but I get enough signals in red, yellow and green. I don't need blue. Bye.

SHE EXITS QUICKLY.

JOHNSON

(SERIOUS) Red, yellow and green, eh? For a young lady working the traffic light patrol, your daughter seems to be doing pretty well...

MARTHA

Oh, no, H.V. It isn't what you think. It isn't her body that's being sold. I mean, it isn't her body... Oh, dear! If only George were here to straighten this out!

JOHNSON

(COMFORTING HER IN HIS ARMS) Now, now, Martha. Don't you worry about a thing. It's not girls like your daughter I'm after. It's the ring leaders of this sort of operation.

(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

But it sure does sadden me to see a
fatherless girl driven into The Life.

WORDS FAIL MARTHA OVER CLOSING MUSIC.

FADE OUT.

ACT THREE

MARY'S KITCHEN, OVERLAPPING - AFTERNOON

CATHY ENTERS FURTIVELY.

CATHY

(CALLING LOW AND URGENT) Mary? Mary?

MARY ENTERS IN ONE OF TOM'S OVERCOATS.

MARY

Cathy!

MARY GOES TO HUG HER, BUT CATHY
BRINGS HER HANDS TO HER SIDES.

CATHY

You running off to join the Army, or what?

MARY

Oh, you mean the coat. No. I was just
trying it on for Tom. See... when the
sleeves come to here (SHOWS) on me they're
just right for him. (FORCED) Come in!
Sit down! Boy, it's great to see you.
What a surprise!

CATHY

A shock, you mean. Why didn't anybody
tell me Ma was so thick with the law?

MARY

Law... Law. Oh! You mean Detective Johnson!

CATHY

"H.V."

MARY

Detective H.V. Johnson. And mother? Oh, Cathy, they're not thick. He's just been over there exposing mother's con job. You know, those UFO experts, I mean, "UFO" isn't their university, it's their flying object, which was unidentified, until Detective Johnson identified it as a con job. They said they found Daddy in a cosmic warp.

CATHY

It's warped alright. I mean, I've got enough to cope with without having to cope with cops in my own backyard.

MARY

But he's not in your backyard, Cathy; he's in mother's. And she needs somebody to protect her now. I mean, somebody who won't take advantage of her probably desperate need to be taken advantage of.

CATHY

Yeah, well, in that case she better get somebody to protect her from that detective.

(MORE)

CATHY (CONT'D)

And not me, because selling your baby is even more illegal than selling your body. Which is what, if I'm lucky, he thinks I'm doing because of the dress I'm wearing and the chauffeured limo outside.

MARY

There is? (GOES TOWARDS WINDOW) Nice dress. Oh, look at that finish!

CATHY

... So I can't go home again.

MARY

It makes our car look like that starlet. You know, the one whose hair's too dull. And we were just Simonized Tuesday. What do they use to get those reflections?

CATHY

I don't know. (SULLEN) I'll ask if I remember to think about it.

MARY

(THINGS ARE AWKWARD) Well! How about coffee?!

CATHY, STILL SULLEN, SHAKES HEAD "NO".

MARY (CONT'D)

Chun..King?

CATHY

Please, Mary, don't be angry with me for not wanting to give you and Tom the baby. I don't even want to give it to Christine any more, but I'm under contract.

MARY

Angry? Who's angry? How could I be angry with the one person I've always shared everything with, just for giving her baby to someone she doesn't even like in exchange for a rented car? I mean, it's perfectly understandable.

CATHY

Well, I don't understand it either. It's just that I'm doing what feels right to me. Or did, until I found out I'm supposed to be awake through it all.

MARY

Oh, well, coffee'll pick you right up. Or a Coke? What about a Coke? A diet Pepsi? No? Yes?

CATHY

I'm not supposed to take any stimulants. Christine wants a completely natural birth.

MARY

(SEIZE THE TIME) Natural birth! At home! What a wonderful idea! At home! Oh, Cathy!!

CATHY

Well, at least she's going to let me do it in a hospital.

MARY

What's completely natural about that?

CATHY

(MAKES FACE) No anaesthetics or inducer drugs.

MARY

But travel, Cathy. Think of the travel. I mean, there you will be, having very natural contractions, and you'll have to go from your room at the Addamses into a chauffeured limousine to the admitting room, to the labor room, to the delivery room, to the recovery room, to a hospital bedroom, before you can get back to the Cadillac and into your garret! I mean, Cathy. That is not a very natural way in which to contract. Even under a contract. You see, it produces tension. And tension equals pain. Because of which, they usually give you Demerol unless you yell at them not to. Which you probably won't feel like doing because you'll be so exhausted you won't care that Demerol has its peak effect on the baby thirty-six hours after the injection to the mother. It's depressing. Demerol, I mean. For babies. Very artificially depressing. But, at least you won't know how depressing it is for your baby, because you'll be too depressed to care on account of how they just grab it away from you on the spot.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

And separation raises the likelihood of post-partum depression by a conservative 50% and a liberal 83%. Both of which are statistically significant if you don't like being depressed after partum.

CATHY

Mary...

MARY

What?

CATHY

You sound pretty prepared for this discussion.

MARY

Not prepared, Cathy. It's called "prepped". I mean, I was definitely prepped when I had Heather. I mean, believe me, it is much worse than Dick Clark and jock itch. Much worse. I mean, I thought I'd go crazy, and it was a close shave. Oh, Cathy! Please learn from my mistakes and don't think of having a baby like removing a tumor. Think of it more like a pre-fab add-on. I mean, it is the most beautiful, natural thing in the world if you're not contra-indicated and learn how to breathe.

CATHY

Well, if it's so natural, how come I got to go to school to learn how to breathe?

MARY

What's so natural about going to school to learn how to breathe? Is that what you asked?

CATHY

Forget it, Mary, I was just kidding. Anyway, I think I may have a way out of the whole thing.

MARY

Cathy, no! Throwing yourself down a flight of stairs is not the answer.

CATHY

I mean, a way to get out of this whole natural childbirth thing. See -- in order to be on the program you have to have a husband coach... Somebody to tell you whether to breathe or push. And he has to go to the breathing school, too. Only there isn't any "he".

MARY

Brian won't do it?

CATHY

I don't think it's the kind of breeding he was bred for, Mary.

MARY

What about Christine?

CATHY

She wants to know enough to fake it.

MARY

Oh. Well... I've got it! Now, Cathy, please don't think I'm saying what I'm about to say because possession is nine-tenths of the law or because fathers who participate in the baby's birth also tend to participate much more actively in post-natal care.

CATHY

I don't think I want to hear this.

MARY

I'll be the father.

CATHY

(I KNEW IT. CORRECTING) Husband coach.

MARY

Husband coach.

CATHY

Funny, that's exactly what I thought you were going to offer. There's only one little problem.

MARY

A doctor! We'll find one. I'll use my mental health contacts to find one, since home birth is such a mentally healthy procedure.

CATHY

Mary, the problem is that you're not a husband.

MARY

I know. But because you're my sister, I'll be a father. A female father. (OH JOY) In other words, mother! I mean, what could be better than a mother-coach? Or a person! I'll be a person coach! Cathy, I'm perfect for this, believe me. I'm a person who's had a baby, so I already have some experience... And I'm good in emergencies... And I'm your very own sister!

CATHY

Right. And it's supposed to be a man.

MARY

Oh, no, Cathy. That's "usually," not "supposed to". And that's discrimination. Besides, it's ridiculous. You've heard of midwives and wet nurses, haven't you? I mean, just listen to that: "Mid-wives" "Wet nurses". Nobody's ever heard of a "mid-husband" or a "wet doctor" have they? No. I mean, that's what I mean. Being a father is definitely a job that mothers know best.

CATHY

Oh, brother!

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE #173